# Big Game Species Conservation Program



# **Prospectus**

# Bass Hill Wildlife Area (BHWA) bitterbrush restoration

Brian Ehler
Environmental Scientist
Northern Region Wildlife Management

Proposed Start Date: October 2011

**Proposed Completion Date:** December 2014

## **Executive Summary including Statement of Need**

Last year, a fire at the state-owned Bass Hill Wildlife Area (BHWA) burned approximately 200 acres of the property, some of which was dominated by bitterbrush. Bitterbrush is an important source of winter forage for deer in the area. In recent years, wildfires and conversion of shrub steppe plant communities to other uses has significantly decreased the availability of bitterbrush to deer in Lassen County.

A 25 acre site within the burn at BHWA was seeded with bitterbrush in 2010, and installation of deer proof fencing is needed to prevent young seedlings from browsing until they become established.

#### Introduction

Bass Hill Wildlife Area consists of approximately 5,500 acres of shrub steppe and grassland habitats in Lasssen County. The area was primarily acquired to preserve winter range for the Bass Hill portion of the Doyle deer herd.

Bitterbrush at BHWA provides a critical source of protein for deer in winter. When burned, it is often converted to areas dominated by exotic grasses. Restoration by seeding bitterbrush using a rangeland drill and erecting temporary fencing to protect young plants from browsing has proven to be successful. In 2010, a lightning fire burned approximately 200 acres of the BHWA. This proposal is intended to fund the restoration of bitterbrush by constructing an exclusion fence surrounding 25 acres within the burn which has been reseeded with bitterbrush.

#### **Objective**

To restore 25 acres of critical deer winter range at BHWA.

#### **Methods**

The project site will be fenced to protect bitterbrush seedlings planted in 2010, until they are mature enough to withstand browsing by deer. The project site will be monitored annually to evaluate the success of the reseeding effort. It will be reseeded as necessary should the initial seeding effort fail prior to fence construction.

### **Products (and estimated dates of completion)**

- The project site will be fenced during the winter of 2011/2012.
- Monitoring of seedling growth will continue for 5 years post planting.

• A report will be prepared at the completion of the project for submission to the Wildlife Branch describing the methods and results of the restoration effort.

### **Collaborators**

CalFire work crews will fence the project site.

# Personnel Requirements and Funding from CDFG

\$4,000 is requested for fencing supplies and to reimburse the CalFire work crew.

### Issues to be Resolved

None